



Afternoon Alert - Wednesday, April 12, 2017

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HEADLINES

Noon news

All networks aired a live press conference by Japanese figure skater Mao Asada, who announced her retirement from competition on her blog on Monday.

INTERNATIONAL

Suga says GOJ prepared for contingencies on Korean Peninsula

NHK reported this afternoon that in relation to the Trump administration's stance of not ruling out the use of force against North Korea, Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga told a press conference this morning that the GOJ is working closely with the U.S. and South Korea and preparing for any contingencies, including the possibility of Japanese nationals having to be evacuated from the Korean Peninsula. The network said Suga once again welcomed the Trump administration's stance on North Korea, and said: "We are paying utmost attention to North Korea, and it is the government's utmost responsibility to protect the lives and peaceful daily existence of the Japanese people. We will continue to work closely with the U.S. and South Korea with regard to North Korea." He also said: "Assuming that Japanese nationals on the Korean Peninsula might need to be protected or evacuated, we are continuously making the necessary preparations and conducting studies so that we can respond to any contingencies."

With regard to media reports that the U.S. side referred to the possibility of a U.S. military strike against North Korea and the Japanese side asked for prior consultation should the U.S. decide to

attack North Korea during a meeting between senior government officials of the U.S. and Japan held this month, Suga was quoted as saying: "That is not true. I categorically deny it."

Secretary Mattis says U.S. will not intervene in civil war in Syria

NHK reported at noon that Secretary of State Mattis held a press conference on Tuesday, during which he stressed that the Trump administration has no intention to fully intervene in the civil war in Syria and that its policy to prioritize defeating ISIS remains unchanged. The Secretary was quoted as saying: "If they use chemical weapons again, they are going to pay a very stiff price." He also reportedly said: "It was not a harbinger of some change in our military campaign." In addition, Secretary Mattis reportedly said the Trump administration will continue to maintain dialogue with Russia. Concerning the deployment of the USS Carl Vinson to the Western Pacific, the Secretary explained that the deployment is within the scope of normal operations.

Putin, Abe to meet in late April as planned

Asahi reported online from Moscow on a meeting between former Diet member Muneo Suzuki and a senior Russian diplomat, during which the two officials confirmed that Prime Minister Abe will hold meetings with President Putin in Moscow on April 27-28 irrespective of the Japanese government's support for the recent U.S. attack on Syria. The Russian official reportedly told the Japanese politician that relations with Japan are important for Moscow.

- [Japan, US wrestle over agenda for economic dialogue](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Fewer repercussions if China stops Pyongyang's nuke program: LDP Komura](#) (Mainichi)
- [Cartoon: U.S.-China summit](#) (Sankei)
- [Cartoon: Kim Jong Un](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Japan, U.S., ROK to discuss North Korea's nuclear development in Tokyo later this month](#) (Mainichi)
- [Japan unable to implement UNSC sanctions on DPRK due to inadequate domestic laws](#) (Sankei)
- [U.S. told Japan before Trump-Xi talks of option to strike N. Korea](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Concerns over the growing popularity of 'Japan First'](#) (Mainichi)
- [Abe to visit Moscow April 27-28: Russian official](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Cartoon: Presidents Trump and Putin](#) (Asahi)

SECURITY

No progress made on Futenma reversion 21 years after agreement

The two major Okinawa dailies reported extensively on the 21st anniversary on Wednesday of the 1996 SACO accord on the conditional return of MCAS Futenma, underscoring that its implementation remains elusive. Okinawa Times wrote that since the two governments formally agreed on building the Futenma replacement facility featuring a V-shaped pair of runways off Camp Schwab in 2006, no candidates supportive of the accord have prevailed in national, gubernatorial, or mayoral elections, claiming that this shows that the Okinawan people are rejecting the existing relocation plan. The papers criticized the Abe administration for failing to remove the danger associated with the Futenma facility and going ahead with the extremely unpopular base realignment initiative even though doubts have been raised about the effectiveness of the planned Marine installation for deterring North Korea and China. They projected that the schism between Governor Onaga and the central government will further deepen as Tokyo appears to have no intention to listen to Okinawa's plea for the cancellation of the ongoing FRF construction work in Henoko.

- [ACSAs with U.S., UK, Australia to be approved by the Diet this week](#) (Asahi)
- [Russian military aircraft flew southward toward waters off Chiba](#) (Sankei)
- [Police investigating hard-to-detect cyberattacks on critical infrastructure since four years ago](#) (Asahi Online)
- [DPRK may awaken sleeper agents in Japan](#) (THEMIS)

POLITICS

- [Prime minister's schedule on April 11](#) (Nikkei)
- [Gist of interpellations on state secrets documents at Lower House committee, April 11](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Abe Cabinet's support rate unfazed by school scandal](#) (The Japan Times)
- [Democratic Party decides to expel Nagashima from the party](#) (Asahi)
- [LDP Tokyo chapter vows to unite to oppose Governor Koike in assembly election](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Abe to visit Kumamoto on April 14](#) (Mainichi)
- [Mrs. Abe reduces social media messaging, other activities in light of school scandal](#) (Yomiuri)

ECONOMY

Toshiba's decline

NHK's "Close-up Gendai +" reported on the decline of Toshiba, looking into what went wrong and whether the Japanese industrial giant will be able to retain the Toshiba brand. The program reported that it learned from interviews with Toshiba employees as well as former employees that although the management made many miscalculations and errors of judgment, there was a corporate culture in which employees had no choice but to follow the orders of the management. The program said while Toshiba has decided to sell its profitable semiconductor business in order to cover the huge losses it suffered in its nuclear division, there are still many obstacles to overcome. The program said Toshiba will have to decide which company to sell its chip business to by June.

- [Sale of Toshiba's semiconductor business to be screened strictly: CCS Suga](#) (Mainichi)
- [Tokio Marine sells insurance policy to cover human rights expenses](#) (Nikkei)

SCIENCE

- [JAXA announces Japan-France joint development of probe to explore moons of Mars](#) (Mainichi)

SOCIETY

- [Rights group renews criticism of death penalty in Japan](#) (The Japan Times)
- [Editorial: Countermeasures required to deal with population decline](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Notorious "JK business" going online to lure customers](#) (Yomiuri Evening edition)

OPINION POLLS

- [53% support Abe cabinet, NHK public opinion poll](#) (TV / Social media)
- [Cabinet and political party support rates, NHK public opinion poll](#) (TV / Social media)

